

June 27, 2019

Iowa Department of Human Services/Council on Human Services
Hoover State Building, 5th Floor
1305 E Walnut Street
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Council on Human Services,

Iowa AEYC appreciates the opportunity to provide input at the annual public hearing regarding the SFY 2021 budget for the state of Iowa. Iowa AEYC believes that increased and sustained funding should be allocated to promote quality early care and educational experiences to all children, provide assistance to struggling families, support the child care workforce who provide critical education, and meet the unique developmental and educational needs of our youngest Iowans.

The Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children (Iowa AEYC) is a non-profit association that promotes high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age 8, by connecting practice, policy, and research. Iowa AEYC works to advance the diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and supports the workforce that cares for, educates, and works on behalf of young children. Iowa AEYC represents over 1,100 members across the state. As the Iowa affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), our members represent our state's early childhood workforce of over 30,000 people. We help in efforts that to improve teaching and learning, promote leadership and professional development in our field, support accreditation and excellence in child care and early childhood educational programs, and work to build public awareness through advocacy and outreach.

Iowa has a child care crisis. The lack of quality and available child care is an increasingly concerning issue impacting children, families, and businesses. Families struggle with the high cost of child care, lack of child care, and shortage of services to meet the special needs of their young children. More than 42% of the registered child care providers have left the field in just the past five years and many colleges are not promoting child development or early childhood education as a viable occupation. Iowa AEYC believes that career paths into child care and early childhood education should be supported with sustained funding to build system supports for the Child Development Associate (CDA) certification.

Child care providers receive low pay, work long hours, have stressful positions, and most do not have access to benefits through their employment. Child care providers are

paid so low that the career is excluded from the “high demand job” definition in the Future Ready Iowa programs and initiatives even though it is one of the highest demand jobs in Iowa. Iowa AEYC believes that there should be support for strategies proven to increase the retention of educated providers in the workforce through funding for WAGE\$ scholarships state-wide.

Child care providers struggle to find access to affordable and appropriate training and formal education to meet the unique needs of young children. Iowa AEYC believes that funding should be targeted to support the formal education and training for providers to increase their skills in supporting the social emotional development and cognitive development of children using developmentally appropriate practices. Iowa AEYC believes that there should be greater support for proven strategies to raise the education level of the workforce through increases in funding for T.E.A.C.H scholarships.

Iowa AEYC believes funds should be allocated to provide more targeted supports for expanding infant/toddler care, care for children in families experiencing homelessness, care for children with diverse linguistic or cultural backgrounds, rural areas with limited services of high quality, services for families in need of irregular services, and for care during nontraditional hours. Iowa AEYC believes that there should be additional increases to child care assistance (CCA) rates to ensure more equal access to quality child care between families receiving and not receiving child care assistance. Iowa AEYC also believes that there should be increased financial incentives for providers on the state’s quality rating system.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to provide input for the updates in the SFY 2021 budget for the state of Iowa to create a plan that best serves all children and families and supports the workforce.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jillian LS Herink". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jillian LS Herink
Executive Director